

Special Select Standing Committee on Members' Services

Monday, August 23, 1982

Chairman: Mr. Amerongen

2:10 p.m.

MR. GOGO: I move adoption of the minutes of April 5.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've come to order. We have Mr. Gogo's motion to adopt the minutes of April 5, 1982. All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried. The next item is CPA members' spouses travelling and subsistence. The committee may recall having approved and having also included in the estimates an allowance for paying the travelling expenses, et cetera, of spouses accompanying members to CPA conferences. As far as I know, at the time we didn't deal with the question of whether key staff would be included. On one occasion, I approved that for key staff. Now the question arises as to whether it will become a practice. By key staff, I have in mind possibly the Clerk, the Clerk Assistant, conceivably the Law Clerk . . .

MR. GOGO: That's the Parliamentary Counsel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, the Parliamentary Counsel. That's probably about it. There could be occasions that there's no spouse there, when the chief of the administration, Charlene Blaney, might go. She helps with some of these conferences. Occasionally there's a CPA thing that occurs -- even within the province we have to go to Calgary, because we have parliamentary visitors coming from other jurisdictions who go to Calgary and don't go to Edmonton. That's the nub of the thing.

MR. GOGO: Speaking to it in principle, Mr. Chairman, it may be unfortunate the Clerk is here, but . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you like him to leave for a minute?

MR. GOGO: . . . I've found in the past that when my spouse has accompanied me, the Clerk's spouse -- and I guess I'm addressing the fact that Cathy is there. With another Clerk, it may not be the same way. Just how helpful the wives have found it to have the Clerk's spouse there -- it has been extremely helpful. Aside from other budgetary things, I know that's been very positive. I can speak on behalf of my own wife. So I would encourage it. That would be my view.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, if I could speak to that, I agree with what John said, although I haven't been travelling with you. But I understand. When our spouses are around, I think all of us are a lot happier.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It isn't just that.

MRS. OSTERMAN: But in terms of doing your job and so on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Darn right.

MRS. OSTERMAN: It's all part of it. But I think this item should come up for discussion when we talk about our new budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We can advert to it again when we discuss the new budget, but I recall when Alberta had to do its share of a plenary conference of CPA. Some of the events took place in Calgary and Fort McMurray. It was a real help -- for instance, I remember Mrs. Hansen, Don Hansen's wife, how they pitched in and helped with the hosting. It's a worth-while thing.

So that's over to deal with in the estimates. Everybody agree with that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The guidelines for charge cards, or credit cards. A few slight anomalies have arisen there. As you know, these credit cards are used for gasoline, oil, and car washes. We had one or two members highly incensed because when charges were scrutinized, it was discovered they had included some antifreeze. In this case, I think it was gasoline antifreeze. It seems to me that rather than have a petty annoyance of that kind and the bookkeeping and stuff . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: Excuse me . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Am I on another item?

MR. STEFANIUK: I think we're just a little ahead. That's a specific item on the agenda.

MRS. OSTERMAN: 6b. While we're on it, why not just finish it?

MR. STEFANIUK: There's a general sort of thing that comes under this item that refers to the issuance of cards and has reference to PetroCan -- this document and the policy which was drafted by Parliamentary Counsel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MRS. OSTERMAN: So we have to do the general one first.

MR. STEFANIUK: If that's the meeting's wish.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want to explain the situation?

MR. STEFANIUK: There is a policy statement, which I believe you circulated to members of the committee with the agenda for this meeting, that deals with gasoline credit cards generally. Would you like me to go through it briefly?

Each member may request the Legislative Assembly office to provide him with one or more gasoline credit cards issued by oil companies of their own choice for use according to the following guidelines: the member may use his cards to charge the purchase of fuel or oil only for an automobile or light aircraft being used by the member or one of his constituency office staff. The purchase of fuel and oil should be made only when the intended travel is to be

undertaken by the member or one of his constituency office staff travelling on behalf of the member, and is expected to be principally for one or more of the following purposes: travel within Alberta to attend a sitting of the Assembly or one of its committees or travel related thereto, travel within Alberta to enable the member to carry out his constituency responsibilities. Cards should not be used to charge fuel or oil for travel primarily related to party or government affairs or for private travel.

It is recognized that a member's travel in any period will have a variety of purposes, and members are asked to use their discretion in the proportion of their purchases for which they use the gasoline credit cards, recognizing the above guidelines. The charges will be paid directly by the Legislative Assembly office, out of money appropriated for that purpose. If the member discovers he has inadvertently used a card for a purpose not authorized by these guidelines, he should advise the Legislative Assembly office, which will invoice him directly for the charge in question. Charges should be signed by the member only, and the card should be retained in his possession. If the member loses the card, to minimize fraudulent use he should immediately advise the Legislative Assembly office.

The purpose of the draft of this statement is a result of concern expressed by the Auditor General relative to lack of authority for the issuance of gasoline credit cards to Members of the Legislative Assembly. In effect, if approved in this or revised form, this would constitute a policy established by this committee relative to issuance of the cards in the first place.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I haven't seen that.

MR. STEFANIUK: Was this not circulated?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I haven't got a copy of it either. I have a copy of a previous draft.

MR. STEFANIUK: It was something that was addressed to you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. I haven't got it here.

MR. STEFANIUK: I think the statement should be carefully studied by the committee, Mr. Chairman. In light of that, perhaps the item should be moved to the agenda for the next meeting and assurance given that the statement in its draft form will be circulated to members in advance.

MR. PURDY: I move that that be tabled to the next meeting so members of the committee will have an opportunity to review it. Could we take a copy with us today?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. GOGO: As an item of business, Mr. Chairman -- it may fall under guidelines. At some point today, could we discuss abuse, if any, of charge cards? I want some advice of my colleagues. Is that too sensitive? It may be under item 6; I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We could discuss it now.

MR. GOGO: I would feel uncomfortable discussing it now, in view of the fact that as a result of reading that statement I'm going to write some suggestions as a draft for the policy, for the next meeting. I'd be interested in knowing what abuses, if any, are going on now. That should be part and parcel of consideration of the policy. But if that's too sensitive . . .

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think we have to be careful talking about abuses as opposed to things that are brought to members' attention. But if there seems to be a lack of knowledge on the part of some members who won't accept or are quarrelling with the supposed policy we now have in place, I guess that's a problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The policy arose from an initiative of Dr. Horner, seven years ago. I understand it covered four things: gasoline, oil, car washes, and grease. I'm not sure it covered anything else. I don't think tires were included, for example. The Auditor General, as the Clerk mentioned, picked this up and wanted some formal -- I suppose most of all he would prefer an amendment to the Legislative Assembly Act. But if this committee were to approve a policy, I think that likely would suffice, at least for the time being.

MR. STEFANIUK: The policy statement in effect as a result of an earlier decision of this committee reads in part: the Clerk's office will honor gasoline credit card charges covering only the cost of gasoline, oil, car washes, oil changes, and grease -- five items -- when such expenses are incurred in connection with a member's duties as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. GOGO: That's a pretty wide range.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would even mean that somebody else could drive a member's car and still charge it up.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Nobody else can sign the credit card.

MR. STEFANIUK: It has been done.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I didn't realize that. This is something new when you talk about people travelling on your behalf. I didn't even know that.

MR. STEFANIUK: That of course is a draft policy statement, which is for this committee's consideration. If I may, Mr. Chairman, our experience shows that others have signed for the charges incurred on a member's gasoline credit card. When the expense has been questioned, the reply has been given very simply: I didn't have time to fill up my car, so I sent my son, daughter, wife, brother, to have my car filled up for me. We're in no position to question the integrity of a member when receiving a reply like that.

In reply to Mr. Gogo's query, from time to time items are charged which do not qualify. I don't think those constitute abuses as such. I think they may constitute oversights, and we very simply monitor the charges that come through. When a member has charged something that isn't eligible, we bill the member. That's the kind of thing that occurs.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, with regard to the policy guidelines you want the committee to approve at the next meeting, there is no problem in the interim in your view, Mr. Clerk, and things can proceed as they have been proceeding. I take it that's all right.

MR. STEFANIUK: We have a policy statement by which we are guided. What I referred to at the outset was the authority, if you like, for having the card exist in the first place. We have a guideline which tells us how to use the card, but we don't have the authority to have the card.

MRS. OSTERMAN: But you have accepted as part of your administrative policy to accept signatures other than the member's?

MR. STEFANIUK: In light of the responses we have received.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Unless you had a policy dictating otherwise.

MR. STEFANIUK: Right.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. Purdy that this go over. We can get copies made and hand them out right now. You might make an extra one for me for this file, please.

It's agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The guidelines for promotional materials allowance: you worked on that, Bill.

MR. PURDY: Yes, we have material in place now but haven't had an opportunity to take it to our full caucus.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. You have another draft?

MR. PURDY: Yes. Bohdan and I have another draft which, as I said, I haven't had an opportunity to take to our colleagues for their approval before coming back to this one for approval.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we going to have any trouble with the Auditor General over that?

MR. STEFANIUK: We fall back on the same old statement. It was approved by the House; it's in the budget. What we are lacking here is not an authority, because in effect the House provided authority by approving the budget. We are lacking an administrative guideline. We have this amount of money. How do we dole it out? Is it first come, first served? Is every member appropriated a certain number of dollars which he can exhaust? What can he buy, and what can't he buy? Does it have to be centrally purchased? Can he go to any other source and do it that way?

MR. PURDY: I would imagine that by the call of the next meeting, unless we really get tied down in budget items, we should be able to resolve it.

MR. STEFANIUK: Our only difficulty is that that budget was drawn up on the premise that it would be an allocation of a certain number of dollars to each member. We assumed that it would be X number of dollars. Some members are very close to having exhausted that already. So it's rather important that we know in which direction we go.

MRS. OSTERMAN: The guidelines for the items wouldn't change the budget allocation.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes, they would. What I have is a bulk budget for the Legislative Assembly as a whole. But there is nothing to say to me that I must divide that by 79 and give everybody an equal piece, or divide a part of that universal figure by 79 and keep some for group presentations. That kind of thing comes into play.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think it would be a fair issue to get into. Have you dealt with that in terms of number of people per constituency and the different kinds of groups that may come out? Thinking back, one member may have a lot more people in his constituency but may not have nearly as many groups. How do we get into the functioning of all that? It's just not cut and dried as well as the communications allowance is, which is a little easier. In fairness, we will have what seems to be an imbalance in some areas. But if it's closely scrutinized, you'll find that it not necessarily is.

MR. STEFANIUK: You know how closely that relates to individual members' personal habits. I guess the big item we use is those lapel pins. Some members have a tendency to use them very, very heavily. Others don't want to be bothered with them. My difficulty in lacking guidelines now is that if we continue to accede to members' demands and later be confronted with a policy that limits the member, we'll be in the position of going back to the member and saying, you exhausted your allocation; you now owe us \$300, \$400, \$500. Can you imagine what happens to the roof then?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, may I make a suggestion? I don't know whether we need a motion, but I suggest that until otherwise dictated by a change in policy, our policy now should be on a per capita, per-member basis in dividing up the allowance. Then there is a ceiling. Nobody can get into trouble if they know there's a ceiling.

MR. STEFANIUK: We've been quoting a ceiling out of the corners of our minds really. But if a member ever pinned the administration down and said, where do you get this figure of \$1,500 or \$2,000 from, I wouldn't have a leg to stand on.

MRS. OSTERMAN: But in fairness, how could you possibly allocate so-called more than his share when somebody else might come in January 1 and your budget is gone. So I think we should have that in place.

MR. GOGO: If the so-called \$1,500 per member is the total divided by 75 -- then we adopt what you're suggesting on a per capita. Then Cypress has 6,400 voters and Calgary McCall has 40,000, and there could be a great embarrassment to one member in Cypress -- he could have used \$1,500 and he's entitled to only \$1,200, \$400, or \$300.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I'm not saying per capita. I'm saying per member; in other words, straight division.

MR. GOGO: I'm sorry, I thought you said per capita.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I meant per member. When we had our budget discussions, we based it per member. We multiplied X number of dollars 79 times. So I think that's the way it's going to have to be until we find that there's a different way of allocating. If that's the case, it would have to go into place for the next budget year. We don't possibly have time now to change it, because otherwise we could have some members in trouble.

MR. STEFANIUK: Except that we still have the bulk of the present budget year to go. We're just four months -- April, May, June, July -- into the current budget year.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's why we have to have a policy for this budget year. I'm saying that on the basis of this budget year, we do it per member straight across the board -- divide 79 into. That's the way we rationalized, figured out the budget in the first place. Then next year, let's look at it. We'll have a little time. Number one, we'll put a budget in place; it'll probably be based on the previous budget, the one we're working on right now. Number two, we'll have time to speak to members and ascertain what kinds of inequities we might actually create. We don't have that kind of opportunity now.

So in order to make it fair and not get any member into difficulty . . .

MR. GOGO: And what their experience has been.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's right. So I make a motion that the budget be allocated the same amount per member, right across the board.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In other words, your motion is that for the current fiscal year, '82-83, the total appropriation for promotional materials be divided by 79, and the result is each member's quota.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's right.

MR. PURDY: A question on that, Mr. Chairman, to the Clerk. Does the amount in the budget include the various items you would have for presentation at, say, a CPA type of . . .

MRS. OSTERMAN: Let's split that off. This motion I want based on our budget discussion that spoke to -- we can pick that up. I'm sure you can go back and look in the transcript. Based on the transcript of our budget discussions -- and I want this as part of the motion in order to rationalize this motion -- a per-member figure was discussed and decided upon for promotional items. Based on that discussion that we will -- for the purpose of allocating the budget, the Clerk will use that per-member allocation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion is that we adopt as the per-member limit for the promotional materials allowance the per-member figure which was used in arriving at this year's appropriation for that purpose.

MR. GOGO: Can that be done?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't see why not.

MR. STEFANIUK: This committee can establish that policy. You see, originally we had a bulk figure, which was really for the group presentations. Then there was a proposal to institute the promotional materials allowance. We glued the two figures together and arrived at a total budget. We can go back and unglue them, if you like.

MRS. OSTERMAN: As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, I thought the policy was inherent because of our budget discussions. I just assumed that would be in place, because that's how we arrived at the figure.

MR. STEFANIUK: It's more than just the dollars; it's the manner of usage.

MR. GOGO: That's my concern. For the sake of argument, if we took \$1,500 times 79, only about 80 per cent of that total could go to members because the Clerk's office obviously is going to use 20 per cent.

MRS. OSTERMAN: No, it was on top of.

MR. STEFANIUK: The two figures were glued together, so we can separate them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If there's a problem, we'll let you know.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you agree with the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried.

Communications allowance: 40 cents per household. As you know, with 30 cents postage . . .

MR. GOGO: With respect, Mr. Chairman, that's for first class under one ounce. Much of the material doesn't go first class.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I think item 5 should have been shown as 5a, and then the others b and c. Again, there's the guideline for consideration, which was drafted last fall. I wonder if members received that with their agenda. There again was a guideline, a rather lengthy document. That's what members perhaps should have in front of them to consider, number one, the guidelines again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have a copy?

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes. It's this document.

MR. PURDY: Just on another note, Mr. Chairman. These books should be brought up to date and should have this stuff in them when a meeting is being called. I don't even know where my book is now. I think it's down here some place.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Which book?

MR. PURDY: The members' services book.

MRS. OSTERMAN: With all your minutes in it?

MR. PURDY: Yes. I thought it was asked for and my secretary should have brought it down.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I don't have one in my office. A long time ago, an enquiry was made about it. I don't know where it has gone.

MR. PURDY: I'll get my secretary to look again for mine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you can't find it, we'll start a new one.

MR. PURDY: What I'm saying, Mr. Chairman, is that a week or two before calling a meeting, when the agenda and attachments to that agenda are being drawn together, those books should all be gathered together from the members, brought down here, put together, then got back to the members so they would have that information and come to the meeting with some type of credibility.

SECRETARY: Donna Pritzl has those books. You wanted those books started again?

MR. PURDY: I thought it was an ongoing process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I thought so too.

MRS. OSTERMAN: So we're again dealing with something we don't have in front of us, the guidelines for the communications allowance. What needed to be discussed today under this item?

MR. STEFANIUK: Number one, we need a guideline as to how the allowance is to be used, because there are no clearly set out guidelines. We had a guideline drafted for this purpose.

MRS. OSTERMAN: But we've never had a motion to adopt it?

MR. GOGO: We discussed it, if you recall; i.e. content of mailouts and use of the xerox. I don't know if we ever formalized it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We certainly discussed it. I have material going back to last September.

MR. GOGO: Ask Rollie Cook. I'm sure he would have discussed it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry about that.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think we should have a copy brought back. It may be in a file and I just didn't have it brought forward for this meeting.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: I move that it be distributed and that we discuss it, along with the gasoline credit cards, at the next meeting.

MR. GOGO: With respect, Mr. Chairman, I don't know who asked that it be on the agenda. Are we at a critical point regarding some members wanting it changed?

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes. Some members feel the allowance is now inadequate. The other consideration is that when the budget was drawn up, it was based on the last enumeration which was then available, which was the one in preparation for the 1979 election. Since then, there has been a further enumeration and it has shown some very substantial growth in the province as a whole, but some very dramatic growth in certain constituencies. Those members who have had that very dramatic growth in their constituencies are finding themselves hard pressed because of where the budget is based.

So it's a question, one, under item 5a, of determining whether 40 cents per household is sufficient in light of what has happened to postal charges since we drew up the budget that is in effect now; and, number two, shall this committee empower the administration to adjust the total amount of allowance to each member as enumerations occur and as we are able to determine that there has been growth in a given constituency? If that were done, obviously we could be confronted with a shortage of funds. But of course a mechanism is in place whereby we can seek additional funds if this committee moves that we do that.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think we discussed that before. We said we didn't have the figure at the time we put together last year's budget; we didn't know what the postal rates would be. We decided we would ask for a special warrant when the time came and we saw just how short we were going to be. I think that's what we'll have to do. What is it that needs to be done right now?

MR. STEFANIUK: Number one, is 40 cents still okay?

MRS. OSTERMAN: That was based on a 17-cent letter, and there is now 13 cents more.

MR. STEFANIUK: When this program came into being, we arrived at a figure by saying a member may use two mailings a year. We considered the two mailings on a first class basis, at 17 cents, and X number of cents for the preparation of the printed material. We allocated 6 cents to that per copy. That has changed dramatically.

Number one, do you wish to change it now? Do you wish to give us some direction, because we are in the final throes of preparing the budgets for '83-84. Number two, will we be allowed to consider the latest enumeration for the purpose of calculating each member's allotment.

MR. PURDY: The other thing I find a problem with in the way you calculate is that if you take the enumeration, you slash it in half and say that's the number of households. When I did that drop in March, it took me 14,000 copies to get through my constituency and I have only 25,000 voters. So there are a lot more single people who are living in apartment houses . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: Maybe the formula is wrong too. The formula was the number of electors divided by two to arrive at the number of households, multiplied by 40 cents.

MRS. OSTERMAN: It may differ from constituency to constituency, too. In a more rural area, there probably aren't as many apartments or single people living alone.

MR. GOGO: That's addressing the formula. I well understand the background, Mr. Chairman. My question really was, have certain members come to you and said, hey, I'm in serious trouble with the communications allowance, and will you adjust it? That's what I'm wondering about 5a.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it arises from previous discussions in this committee. I'm not aware of any representations we've had from anyone who said they ran short of money. But I assume the reason is that members know what the limit is and they haven't exceeded it.

MR. STEFANIUK: The administration has had individual representations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For more money, yes. But I don't think anybody has overspent.

MR. STEFANIUK: No, because we are not in a position to allow any member to overspend.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can bring it up again when we deal with the estimates, but perhaps there should be a difference whereby in rural constituencies you divide by two and in the cities by one and a half.

MR. PURDY: You can't do that, Mr. Chairman, because I sit as a metropolitan, rural type of -- there's Spruce Grove and Stony Plain.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Look at Airdrie. It's a city.

MR. GOGO: The enumeration will be complete by October 15. Does that present a problem for this committee to rule on at a later date?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We could approve the rest of the estimates and leave that open.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think that would be an excellent idea. At that time, we can take into consideration whatever is necessary in terms of adjusting the '82-83 budget to look at the new postal rates and their effect, and then get a feeling for what might have to be a special warrant we look to getting later in the fall or winter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you're going to follow the formula, depending on when it's going to take effect -- whether it's going to affect current estimates or future estimates -- conceivably there could be reductions in some constituencies, although I'm not aware of any that have had a fall in population.

Would you be content to put this over until we deal with the estimates?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Does that cause Bo any . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: I have something to work with now. This committee has said to me what we are doing, and that's all I can convey to members. In terms of

guidelines, however, obviously that has to be put over because you didn't have the information in advance of this meeting. You'll have to consider that, perhaps at the next meeting. You'll have copies of them today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we have a slightly more sensitive issue. Mr. Clerk.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, one of the concerns we have, and it's on behalf of the members, is including perhaps in a policy statement -- maybe this will need to be addressed soon, perhaps not; I don't know -- what happens to the communications allowance in the event of dissolution.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I understand we're no longer members.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes, but you get paid. Your salaries are divided in 12. We have said to members that you're being paid in 12 equal instalments, because even if dissolution takes place you may have unfinished work within your constituency and you want to finish it, and it's perfectly legitimate work as an MLA.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That includes use of the constituency office.

MR. STEFANIUK: That's going to be another can of worms. In any event, we have the communications allowance. You can appreciate our difficulty. The Legislature is dissolved. The members who are seeking re-election are out there campaigning. When will we start judging whether this is being used as campaign funds or legitimate communications allowance? Or should there be communications other than campaigning when the campaign gets under way? Or do we just pull the curtain then?

MR. PURDY: As one of the veterans sitting here, along with the chairman, my opinion is that on the day the writ is issued things are different. You shouldn't be using your gasoline credit card, your promotional allowance, your communications allowance, your Legislative Assembly office, your constituency office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But suppose you've ordered something the day before the writ is issued?

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's fine.

MR. PURDY: That's legitimate. But I don't think you'll be coming into the Clerk saying, Mr. Clerk, I want you to approve this item day one of an election campaign.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think the policy could be the day the writ is issued, as Bill says. Then everything stops.

MR. GOGO: Let's follow that through, though. The Member for Three Hills has arranged a meeting with constituents, with Mr. Moore of Municipal Affairs, and a few people are coming. The Member for Three Hills is driving up. Whether or not an election writ is issued, I would think the Member for Three Hills is on valid constituency business, and filling up her gas tank with her credit card is certainly legitimate.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: I wouldn't think so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My recollection is that the federal members are allowed to use their constituency offices during an election campaign, but they may not use them for electioneering. I realize there's a narrow line, but everything we do in serving our constituents is electioneering.

MR. PURDY: That's different.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: I was talking to Neil Crawford's EA today, because I want to make some remarks tomorrow night at the nomination meeting about eligibility and what can be expected of an MLA. Off the top of his head, he was of the opinion we were still MLAs right up until the election. He is supposed to be getting a memo to me this afternoon by 4 o'clock so I'll know what to tell this meeting tomorrow night.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That may be helpful. I guess I'm thinking that legally you could say one thing. But in terms of what our policy says it goes beyond that in usage of these various things. It may well be that this committee is able to dictate that to some degree, because the policy is already in place and if we're still considered MLAs -- but whether this committee agrees that that should still continue is something else apart.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we could be getting into difficulty if this is given too narrow a construction. If you can't act as an MLA and use these things for ordinary MLA purposes, then how can you draw MLA pay after the balloon goes up?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, during or after the last election campaign I recall the Clerk of the Assembly sending me an AGT long distance telephone thing, asking me to approve those that were long distance charges incurred as an MLA and those that were not. On there were two long distance phone calls to an office of a certain political party, for \$5 or whatever, that should never have been made. They were promptly paid. That's one example. You used the term "narrow". Where do you draw the line? If you're still the MLA and you have constituency problems, the constituent is entitled to have them solved. If that involves a long distance charge to Mr. Moore's office, are we going to quibble that that won't be paid by the Assembly?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Suppose a worker for one of your opponents runs into a problem with the government.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Reverse the charges to that office. You have RITE lines all over the province, you have the Zenith number.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There could be other matters that might give rise to expenses.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think we're going to have to have a discussion. We're going to have to talk to some of our colleagues about this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe we should see what is done in other jurisdictions where they have special allowances.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That would be very helpful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My recollection is that federal members, for example, use their offices after the balloon goes up. In their case, what is it? Is it 56 days? That would be a long time in which they would have to say, I can't deal with your thing; I can't use my franking privilege or the telephone because right now that's all suspended.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, we may be able to break out the areas that we believe to be a no-no, without any hardship on members.

MR. GOGO: The conundrum obviously is going to be that if the constituency office is there and you have someone under contract who is answering the phone, and you're not allowed into that office even to approve her wages -- you could get ridiculous about this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You wouldn't have to go that far.

MRS. OSTERMAN: You could approve them for a period of time, and they can still handle constituency enquiries and send them along to the department involved.

MR. GOGO: I must be naive, because I can't believe my colleagues would utilize their offices in a political way at all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have a notion that in most cases, if not all, you're right. There would be a considerable sensitivity about that kind of thing.

MRS. OSTERMAN: But if we're allowed to, all that would have to happen is for somebody who is running against you to charge that you're doing all these things. It would be better if it were just a no-no and that people answering the phones say that during the campaign period this office will be used to forward calls to the appropriate department and answer questions, and so on, but the member is no longer a member until re-elected.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That means he can't give the constituency office staff any directions. I can't see that.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, then it's closed for that period of time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You'd have to say that the members get paid from the day they're elected to the day they're re-elected, which is the way it is now, but the pay for the 28 days is holiday pay.

MRS. OSTERMAN: You're paid for a year, Mr. Chairman, and so are teachers. They teach for only 10 months and are paid every month.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The thing developed from sessional indemnity. You were paid per session. Were there two sessions in one year, you got two pays. They did it in B.C. when the NDP got in. They doubled their pays at that time, I'm told. We changed it over to monthly payments, as you know.

MRS. OSTERMAN: But is the pay not based per year? When that commission recommended -- it was not on a yearly basis?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Okay. So we're paid by the year.

MR. PURDY: \$21,000 a year.

MRS. OSTERMAN: It's right there. It happens to be divided by 12. It could have been divided by 11 or whatever, but it's divided by 12.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I would find it helpful to have a jurisdiction that has had some experience with this. That's the province of Ontario, which has had constituency offices for many years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And the feds.

MR. GOGO: I would find it helpful -- I don't want to hold up the agenda for the next meeting.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Could we have that information ahead of time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. Is that enough for that? So 5b is tabled to the next meeting. In the meantime, members are to receive the results of our inquiries of other jurisdictions, particularly the federal and Ontario.

MR. PURDY: It's interesting that under the Legislative Assembly Act the only mention of a term of office of anyone is the Speaker:

The person who holds the office of Speaker at the time of any dissolution of the Legislature shall continue to hold the office of Speaker until the day preceding the date fixed by Proclamation for the next sitting of the Legislature to begin.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's in other jurisdictions as well.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Doesn't it say something about ministers too?

MR. STEFANIUK: We don't have an Executive Council Act in this province, so ministers aren't covered. It's a practice. So ministers stop being members, if you like, on dissolution.

MRS. OSTERMAN: But they continue as members of Executive Council?

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right.

MR. PURDY: You don't have to be elected to be a member of Executive Council.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, there's no formal requirement that a minister be a member. It's a custom.

Can we go to item 6, which I was a little previous about a few moments ago. You've now had additional copies of Norm Weiss's memo and my reply. This is another estimates related item.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I sympathize. A number of members can raise what appear to be inequities in terms of expenses. It's the kind of information that should definitely be in the hands of -- after we have an election

sometime down the road and there's a practice again of appointing a commission. I believe that information should be forwarded.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that very point, we've had three commissions so far: '71, '75, and '79. The Clerk is, ex officio, a staff person for those commissions.

MR. STEFANIUK: No, sir. The commission is appointed by the government. I provided assistance to Mr. Justice Miller in response to his personal request of me to do so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For information. There's a story about that too relating to the Speaker's pay; I won't bring it up now.

The thing that arises from Connie's observations is whether some consideration might be given by the powers that be to appoint another one of these commissions for some kind of consultation. Apart from informal consultations, including one I had with one of the members of the commission on the street one bitterly cold day, I think there isn't enough consultation going on. Somehow or other, the situation of a member should be described a little more accurately to those commissions.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I understood members were interviewed.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes, they were.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I didn't know that.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Former members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Former members, right. It may be hard to work that into terms of reference.

MRS. OSTERMAN: A number of members have been discussing what they perceive to be the problems with the expense allowance. We could all raise what we believe to be inequities.

MR. PURDY: The Legislative Assembly Act is very clear. Section 55 says that your expense allowance shall not be over half your indemnity. So there's nothing we can do about it; it's in legislation.

MRS. OSTERMAN: But a commission . . .

MR. PURDY: Oh, a commission later on could make recommendations to change the Act.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But that relates to unspecified expenses, which are paid in the nature of an allowance to members. I don't think it covers the communications allowance or representation.

MR. PURDY: We're talking about Norm Weiss right now, and he has asked for special consideration under Section 52 of the Legislative Assembly Act. He wants more expense allowance, and by legislation he can't do it until a commission looks at it and an amendment to the Act is made.

MRS. OSTERMAN: It is a budgetary item.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are a number of factors there. You can claim expenses -- for example, you can get your absence approved if you represent the Crown. That opportunity doesn't arise for opposition members. I think some consideration has to be given to the kind of thing Norm has raised. But it could easily be abused too.

MR. PURDY: When the Premier goes to the first ministers' conference, or whatever conference is being held, he has taken Ray Speaker and Grant Notley with him, and I'm sure they've had their expenses paid by some appropriation somewhere.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But not under the Legislative Assembly Act, as far as I know. They aren't there as representatives of the Crown. They probably would be included in the expenses of support staff.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, a question to the Clerk. The guidelines he was talking about with reference to item 3. Do I gather from Mr. Weiss's memo that he could have used his gasoline credit card and filled the aircraft both ways and there wouldn't have been a problem?

MR. STEFANIUK: If he had a private aircraft. If he rented an aircraft, we couldn't pay the rental charges. But he could have used his gas allowance if he was travelling on MLA business.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That should be pointed out to him in terms of some of the places he is flying into.

MR. PURDY: I understand from a discussion he had one time that he was not allowed to do that. I remember a bill going across my desk, which I eventually paid.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, with regard to Mr. Weiss, would it not be permissible that if he's chartering aircraft he can use the gasoline credit card? I'm trying to find some sense of relief for Mr. Weiss. I know what the conclusion of this is. It's going to be a commission, following the next election, to resolve many issues. If that's permissible, can he be informed of that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If he flew his own aircraft, he could charge the fuel.

MRS. OSTERMAN: What if we're not driving our own car? I've put gas in another car that I've borrowed. I've borrowed a vehicle, and nobody has charged me for it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Every one of these considerations increases the amount being spent by members. I'm not sure that's wrong. But some time or other within the next five years, I would like us to discuss a cutback. Every one of these things is leading to an increase. I agree that it should be. Members have been at too much of a disadvantage in comparison, for example, with ministers; to some extent, even in comparison with the Leader of the Opposition. I'm not at all alarmed. I'm just pointing out that these things are all leading to increases.

MR. GOGO: I would go along with your suggestion that, like Montana, this House meet 60 days every second year. That would automatically cut it back.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Except when you're out in your constituency. That's where the biggest amount . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MR. GOGO: This is where the money is spent, not out in our constituencies. That's peanuts compared to . . .

MRS. OSTERMAN: I'm talking about travelling. If you average, as I do, about 300 or 400 miles a weekend, and that doesn't count 320 miles down and back again to here.

MR. GOGO: That's peanuts compared to the 125 million xerox copies used by this place last year. That's all I'm saying.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So what would you like to do with the points raised by Mr. Weiss?

MR. GOGO: Has the Clerk answered the question?

MR. STEFANIUK: I have a policy statement, Mr. Chairman, which derives from this committee. It says, very simply: members are provided with their choice of travel credit cards from Imperial Oil, Gulf, Texaco, Mohawk, Petro-Canada, and Shell, to assist in the performance of their legislative and constituency duties. All gasoline invoices are forwarded directly to the Clerk's office of the Legislative Assembly for payment, and the member's signature must appear on this invoice.

MRS. OSTERMAN: The member's signature must appear.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Then we must have cleared that up. It was a practice that was going on before. The Clerk's office will honor gasoline credit card charges covering only the cost of gasoline, oil, car washes, oil changes, and grease jobs, when such expenses are incurred in connection with a member's duties as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: The signature thing is back.

MR. GOGO: Could we photostat that and send it to Mr. Weiss? I think that would help his problem.

MR. STEFANIUK: What we have here, as I read in this memorandum from the Speaker to Mr. Weiss, is the cost of chartering an aircraft. We have no provision for that. Both deal with chartering an aircraft, and for that purpose, we have no provision.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Nor can we. But if he gets a better deal in terms of finding himself wings or wheels if he puts gas in it, just like all of us do, then he's away. But he's still going to have expenses over and above that.

MR. STEFANIUK: I should mention that I had personally received an enquiry from an opposition member relative to chartering an aircraft from Edmonton to another destination in Alberta, and had to turn it down simply because I felt we had no funds for that purpose.

MRS. OSTERMAN: On the whole issue of travel, when there is a commission, individual members will have to take it upon themselves to point out the inequities. I think all of us should inform them that that will be a wise move to make.

MR. GOGO: If Mr. Weiss used his credit card and billed for \$127 a ride for gasoline, from what I've heard there would be no difficulty paying it. The only difficulty he has is that he is going to get in the north and not find one of those five names as suppliers. That's his problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Without wanting to prolong the discussion, I would be reluctant to see too much of this turned over to a commission, because I don't think it's going to get the detailed consideration based on personal, practical experience that it can get in this committee. It would mean that all kinds of things we've decided in the past would now be turned over to a commission. The commission sits once every four years; the flexibility is minimal.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, it could be part of the terms of reference of the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For the next commission?

MR. PURDY: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then what are you going to do about flexibility between elections?

MRS. OSTERMAN: But if there's an increase depending on all the information that comes in from the experience of various members, probably it would be in dollars without their getting into detail. The flexibility would have to be within the committee.

MR. GOGO: The government appoints that. Therefore, this committee could have influence only by making recommendations to government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What's your wish with regard to Norm Weiss's concerns?

MRS. OSTERMAN: I don't believe there is anything we can do.

MR. PURDY: You'll just have to respond to him and say the Legislative Assembly Act and our policy are very clear, and there's nothing else we can do for you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Under present circumstances, we're unable to deal with it.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Wouldn't it be wise to tell him also that the committee is recommending that this be part of the next commission's terms of reference?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That the anomalies by constituency in terms of expenses be addressed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It makes me very uneasy. That means a communication allowance, representation allowance . . .

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think we can just talk about travel. Travel is really the basic thing. This seems to be the major problem. We could just say travel.

MRS. PRATT: In Saskatchewan, all the members get a special . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: But that's unspecific. They can use it in whatever way they want.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's right. If we kept to the travel allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I think 6b is relatively simple.

MR. STEFANIUK: Very simply, Mr. Chairman, we had a number of members charge things like gas line antifreeze on their cards and we were forced to go back to them and demand payment of 69 cents or \$1.39, because the prepared policy statement doesn't allow for it. The members who were involved became very incensed at the very idea that we should charge them for 69 cents worth of gas line antifreeze, or whatever other kind of antifreeze. This is simply a recommendation to the committee that consideration be given to immediately amending the policy statement to include antifreeze.

MR. PURDY: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have three kinds.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Gas line, windshield washer, and radiator.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are no other kinds are used?

MR. PURDY: There is another kind of antifreeze, but it's bought at a different store.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed that these three antifreeze items be included in the travel expense allowance?

MRS. OSTERMAN: There should be a memo to members. They'll get the minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think a special memo is better. The motion was by Mr. Wolstenholme, I think . . .

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: I'll make it anyway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . that these three items be included and that a memo go to members to that effect.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I guess they're so small it's not going to cause budgetary problems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, and it's a damn nuisance otherwise.

MR. STEFANIUK: The administrative cost is higher than absorbing the cost of the item.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's right. Because it's the easiest way to handle it. You get a call on your credit card, and then I call down and say you're going to get a bill in, watch for this; I need to be billed for it.

MR. STEFANIUK: We have to send the bill, receive the cash, issue a receipt, arrange a deposit with the Provincial Treasurer -- hell, it costs \$14 to process a 69 cent receipt item.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. 7. John, I think you have some interest in that item.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, the background of this is that I became concerned when I talked to members -- and we went through a similar thing with the dental plan -- who were under some misinformation. They thought that perhaps they were covered for certain things. It wasn't the dollar factor. It was the fact that they were very vulnerable in exposing spouses, the fact that they thought they had various types of insurance. I spent a fair amount of time looking into this, along with what other jurisdictions offer for those who read the Parliamentary Report, Alberta is very conspicuous by the absence of any protection for its members in this regard. I've talked to the Minister responsible for Personnel Administration and a variety of people. I've made recommendations to our caucus as to what should be done. Their judgment has been that this is a material benefit that should be dealt with by the commission that is reviewing indemnities, et al, which follows each election. So I've been persuaded to hold back until that occurs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Everybody agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Couldn't we make it retroactive so that heart stress didn't come out under it?

MR. GOGO: I didn't say that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He's just saying the commission is going to have to consider retroactivity.

MR. GOGO: I very much appreciate the help with that information I've had from Charlene Blaney and the Clerk.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. 8, word processing equipment. We have a memo from Mr. Notley, which I think we shared with members of the committee. There are only two ways to handle it. One is by a possible transfer of funds from another part of Mr. Notley's appropriations. The other is by special warrant.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm not in favor of opening up the budget for this year. That's really what we're talking about. Mr. Notley is going to need an increase in his budget.

MR. GOGO: I think it involved a transfer of funds, didn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was the Social Credit one. We did it for Social Credit, but they had a surplus.

MRS. OSTERMAN: They had the dollars there. If Mr. Notley has the dollars there, I would be delighted to entertain something if he needed our recommendation to you to transfer within his now allocated budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You may recall that as a B budget item, we included an allowance for the government caucus for word processing. Mr. Notley says the reason he didn't put in for it in his budget, as a B item or otherwise, is that he didn't think it was practical to do this kind of thing for a single member. However, that's the situation for the current year.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Do you need a motion to dispose of this item?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would be the neatest way.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I move that this item, being a budgetary consideration, be raised at budget time and that it not receive consideration in the '82-83 budget year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But you have no objection to transfer if there are surplus funds in Mr. Notley's current estimates.

MRS. OSTERMAN: No, because that precedent has already been set.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are you all in favor?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried.

Item 9: are there any preliminary observations anyone wants to make? I understand that the preparation of our various estimates goes under the administration of the Clerk, is proceeding, and we'll likely have them by the end of this week. How are we on the Independent members?

MR. STEFANIUK: Everything is scheduled to be concluded by September 1.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any preliminary observations you want to make about that? We propose to prepare the usual budget books. You may wish to consider whether we should have dates agreed on now for dealing with the estimates. Last time, I think it took two and a half meetings.

MR. STEFANIUK: To December 14.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I think we should try to look at an early September date for our first budget meeting.

MR. GOGO: In terms of preliminary discussion, we were going back to Item 5 with regard to the guidelines. We made several observations today about when we deal with budget. The difficulty I'm having is that I think October 15 is enumeration completion date. I guess there is no way that, if we have a meeting before then, we can address that question.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's a component in the budget in terms of the communications allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And there are some items you want us to get information about, such as the use of members' offices and so on.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Then why don't we hold off the budgeting until earlier in October?

MR. STEFANIUK: We'll simply tell the budget bureau . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's where the heat comes from.

MR. STEFANIUK: The heat comes from there, but last year the thing wasn't finished until December.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I suggest we wait until later in October. Maybe some of us might be in a position to get the budget bureau to turn the heat down.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can stand it.

MR. STEFANIUK: That's not a major concern.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you agree with this? During the last or second last, whichever is your preference, week of October, we'll canvass members for the date of a special meeting to deal with estimates.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Which do you prefer? The last week or the second last?

MR. PURDY: I think the House will be sitting by then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the last week?

MR. PURDY: We usually go in about the middle of October.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So during the last week of October, we'll canvass members on an early date for a meeting to deal with estimates. If there are any other items that seem to be of some urgency, we'll include them and you can decide whether you want to deal with them.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, if we harken back to our discussion here earlier, supposing we had a fall as opposed to a spring election and we haven't talked about the situation, it would be wise to have a policy in place that deals with any eventuality in terms of members' constituency offices and so on.

MR. GOGO: So we schedule a meeting before that.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes, let's schedule a meeting before the House opens.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Suppose we do this. We have a couple of inquiries to make in that regard. We'll circulate the answers as soon as we get them. After you have received those, we'll try to arrange a meeting to deal with those. Our terms of reference don't provide for it, but if there were a problem in

convening the committee, which there sometimes is, we could consider even doing it by telephone.

MRS. OSTERMAN: We've done that one other time, Mr. Chairman. That would be excellent.

MR. GOGO: Mid-Septemberish?

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's a good idea.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That covers 9a and b. There is another item, dealing with Hansard. Would you like to kick off on that, Bohdan?

MR. STEFANIUK: Very simply, Mr. Chairman, we decided last year that the most practical way of hiring certain sessional staff for the Hansard organization would be to put them on a fee for service contract; in other words, we simply pay them on receipt of an invoice at a pre-established price. Last fall we discovered we were doing something illegal, since the legislation in place for collecting federal income tax requires that if they work at the employer's place of business during regular hours, they're not self-employed contractors and therefore we must deduct income tax at source, as opposed to simply paying them a fee and then reporting to the revenue authorities what they had made and remitting their tax themselves.

What comes out of this is that we must put them on a regular public service contract. In order to do that, we need to establish positions, with the authority of this committee.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Are you saying a contract position?

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes, just for the session. We don't have those positions in place. In order to put them on the payroll, if you like, and process their documents through the computer at the Data Centre on behalf of Treasury, we must have authority to establish the positions. We are asking for approval by this committee for inclusion in the 1982-83 budget of the Legislative Assembly establishment of 11 contract positions, under expense code 130, payments to contract employees, at 6.5 man-years within element L0800, Alberta Hansard.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Are you saying that is precisely the number of positions and it's a direct transfer from . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right. Fee for service to public service contract.

MRS. OSTERMAN: If it's a direct transfer of positions from one category to another, I would so move.

MR. STEFANIUK: There's no monetary adjustment at all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just switching the label.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Discussion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. GOGO: I must say that is music to my ears to hear the Member for Three Hills actually moving a motion to increase the size of the civil service. This day will be remembered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: She isn't. Just a minute. This is not government; this is parliament. This is not part of the civil service.

MRS. OSTERMAN: He's sitting there, looking like a Cheshire cat. I knew he was up to no good.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The funding of the Independent member Mr. Kesler. As you may remember, as a result of a certain by-election -- did I put that motion?

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have agreed and carried.
We approved a budget -- wasn't that at our last meeting?

MR. STEFANIUK: A budget was approved, yes.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I was just thinking, because we may be winding down -- guidelines for communications. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those are going to be included in your books, anyway. We're definitely going back to the books. You're going to have books ahead of the next meeting and every meeting after that.

MR. GOGO: What about Mr. Kesler?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We approved this money. As I understand it, we ain't got it unless we transfer it or get a special warrant.

MR. PURDY: I think I made the motion the last time around, before the by-election in Olds-Didsbury, if you look in the minutes, that pending the outcome of the election -- if a Social Credit member were not elected, a proportional amount of money would be transferred to whoever was elected.

MR. STEFANIUK: The discussion at the time when the decision was made as to the amount of money related to Mr. Mandeville going back to his caucus to determine what portion of the present budget pertained to the Leader of the Opposition, since it appeared unfair that the budget simply be split in four. Certain perks pertained to the leader. He was going to determine what that amount was, and then further consideration would be given to transferring part of the Social Credit budget for this purpose, or raising the money in part by special warrant.

The predicament I'm in is that we're into the fifth month of the current budget year. You have told me how much to give to Mr. Kesler; you haven't told me what pot to take it out of.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We haven't got that information from Mr. Mandeville.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think you're going to have to request it. Mr. Chairman, if we have the information, you deduct the leader's salary and so on from that budget and divide the rest by four. There still may be a requirement for

funds. We will have to go for a special warrant to fund the remainder. I think we should do that quickly.

MR. STEFANIUK: In effect, Mr. Chairman, we have done that. The administration did that relative to those items which we could readily identify as pertaining to the leader. But it was felt that that caucus should have the opportunity to go over it with a fine-toothed comb. There is a ministerial secretary, a ministerial automobile, et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If this committee isn't going to meet for a while, we have to deal with this thing. Without wanting to be in any way heavy handed about it, it seems to me that if we don't get those figures from the Social Credit caucus -- certainly we'll remind them -- within the administration we're going to have to make a decision as to what those things are, possibly on the basis of what has already been prepared, and then deal with it.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I think that would be exactly the thing to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fred is on vacation right now.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Then a call can be placed, because I would think he would have put that request to his leader. The leader can be contacted. It's still Ray Speaker. The leader can be contacted and reminded that that information was requested. If Mr. Mandeville forgot, that's certainly not the responsibility of the administration. Give them a week. Tell them what we propose to do if they don't have other information. Then act precisely on that if you don't have the information. If they bring information that causes some discussion within administration, it may well be that this committee has to be called together quickly to deal with it.

MR. GOGO: Out of curiosity, what did you arrive at?

MR. STEFANIUK: We had a written document. I can't recall the exact figures now. But in drawing up one of the schedules, we identified precisely what, in our estimation, pertained to the leader. I mentioned a couple of those: the ministerial-level stenographer, the ministerial-level automobile. What we could not determine, though, is what pertained to him in the area of travel allowance, for example, or research allowance, because that was lumped in.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think we had thought about his having an executive assistant and secretary. The automobile is provided by Government Services, is it not?

MR. STEFANIUK: We pay a rental on it.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I see.

MR. STEFANIUK: We get a monthly bill for every automobile we have within the Assembly. We also provide for things like insurance deductibility on those things.

MR. GOGO: What deadline are you looking at?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know.

MR. STEFANIUK: What I'm saying is that for four and three-quarter months now, I have paid him out of one gross pot. In effect, the official office records do not show precisely what has been charged to Mr. Kesler, because we don't have a budget for him in the official record because we didn't know where to take the funds from.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can do that as soon as we get the . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes, if you tell me to transfer or apply for a special warrant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the end of the month?

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think so. A decision made, and then afterwards there would be an amount that would be wanted, I'm sure, because I have a feeling it won't be enough to cover one-fourth of the pie. It could be enough, but if there weren't, I think that special warrant should be sought immediately too, to clear the air and make sure there is no talk of our not providing sufficient funds. I'm very concerned about that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a motion, then, that we approach the Official Opposition again to provide us with the breakdown of the amounts in their appropriations which are attributable to the Leader of the Opposition, and that if that information can't be obtained by the end of the month, we'll deal with it on the basis of what we can work out within the administration?

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's right. The figures are identifiable by the administration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And make one-quarter of the remainder of the funds available to cover Mr. Kesler's appropriations.

MRS. OSTERMAN: And in the event that that one-quarter is not enough, a special warrant be applied for immediately.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Whose motion?

MR. PURDY: I move that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried. Incidentally, with that background we have ample material to justify the special warrant.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Exactly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The last item is whether you want to consider some kind of regular date for the meetings of this committee. Over the years, it has never been done. Often there is a little difficulty in getting dates which will assure us of a quorum. All the members are very busy and belong to a lot of other committees. What is your feeling? Do you want to discuss it today, or do you want to think about it?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I have no quarrel with the way it has been done in the past. We sort out two or three alternative dates and get the maximum we can.

MR. PURDY: If we had regular dates, we could be calling a meeting and have nothing to talk about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's true.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: I don't see that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there any other business?

MRS. OSTERMAN: We'll be ready at the call of the Chair for the items information is coming on, and look forward to a meeting in mid-September.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's to deal with the estimates.

MRS. OSTERMAN: No. It's on what to do about constituency offices and communications allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. With regard to the estimates, the last week in October we sound out members on a meeting date.

MR. GOGO: I think the first one before September 15, if it's possible for the Clerk to have that information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it should be.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes, I think we should have that.

MR. GOGO: September 10 to 15, in there somewhere?

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No other business? Okay, we're adjourned.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I move the meeting be adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 3:42 p.m.